

A
LETTER

TO A

GENTLEMAN of NOBLE,

GUILTY OF

Common Swearing.

Recommended now to all such of that Rank,
as are under the same Guilt.

And fit to be perused by all Their Majesties
good Subjects, that would please both God,
and the King, in helping to suppress this
Crying Sin.

By B. J.

L O N D O N :

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MDCXC.

LETTER

OF THE

CONSTITUTION

AND THE
MANNER OF
THE
ELECTION
OF
MEMBERS
TO
SERVE
IN
THE
LEGISLATIVE
BRANCH
OF
THE
GOVERNMENT
OF
THE
UNITED
STATES
OF
AMERICA

AND

THE

*A LETTER to a Gentleman of Note,
Guilty of Common Swearing.*

Worthy Sir,

THIS comes not from one that can pretend to the Honour of your intimate Acquaintance; yet one, nevertheless, your Friend in the greatest sincerity; yea, much more your Friend, than such as can be unconcern'd, any further than to laugh at that which threatens the Ruin of a Gentleman so well accomplish'd with more than ordinary Parts and Ingenuity.

To deal freely with you, Sir, (since I have lately heard you make so bold with One that's infinitely more your Superior, than you are mine) That which you might reckon the Grace and Emphasis of your Talk, was to me so extremely Noisom and Grievous, that I found it a very difficult Task to be your Patient so long as I was. And because I then spake so little to interrupt the prophane Humour, I think my self obliged in Conscience, to signify the more in this Paper; yea, the rather did I prevail with my self so much to stifle my Resentments at that time, because I resolv'd now to pour them out more fully in this manner, as hoping I might do it with less Offence, and better Effect, to propose the matter to your calm Thoughts, when cool and retired, than if I had offer'd to Ruffle before that Company, who might peradventure have stomach'd me as injurious to their Meeting, had I there solemnly enter'd the Lists to dispute that Cause, which I am going to plead with you at present.

'Tis to me, Sir, a most astonishing thing, to see one whom the Bounty of Heaven has rais'd so much above the Common Level, both for Endowments of Mind, and Enjoyments of the World, so far forget himself, as to fly in the Face of his Sole Founder, and Supream Benefactor, and at the most daring rate, Tear and Blaspheme that Tremendous Name, which he has declar'd, *He will not hold him guiltless that takes in vain.* When 'tis not only the most irregular inverting the end of your Creation, (as if you were made only to dishonour God) but the very height of Ingratitude, so to turn the noble Faculty of *Speech* against him, without whom you could not so much as *speak at all.*

Can you chuse, Sir, but discern what an Absurdity it is to own the *Christian* Name, yea, and bow at the very mention of *Jesus*; and yet so slight and play upon the Great Lord of Christians, as to Swear even altogether, when he Charges every one of his, *not to Swear at all.* And what does it, but still add to the Absurdity, when 'tis readily confest to be a scandalous Evil, which you ought to renounce, and yet you will as confidently persist in this Guilt, as if you did not believe the least harm to be in it?

What sort of *Christian* is that, who Acts as 'twere in spight of *Christ*? And I may ask, What kind of *Subject* too, that is so cross to his *Sovereign*, as boldly to keep up that horrid Ungodliness, which our truly *Christian Prince* has us'd the utmost care to suppress? Letting all the World know, 'tis after another rate now, he would have Men express their Loyalty to him, than to *Swear* and *Drink* for him. As being a great deal Wiser, than to expect they should ever be true to him, who stick not so notoriously to Rebel against an Infinitely Greater. And were it at all possible, they could thus be Loyal, yet how would

would he abhor their Service at the cost of God's dishonour; counting it no commendable Reflection at all on his Sacred Person, to own such bold Pretenders to his Grace and Favour: Who (if his Signal Example will not at last shame them into better Manners) must go Stigmatized as worse Affronters of his *Laws and Majesty*, even than any that take upon them to dispute the Right of his Royal Authority. For tho I do not think, that this admits of any just Scruple at all; yet as to the *Prophane Customary Swearing*, there's not the least Controversy with any whatsoever, But that he, who allows himself in such a known Wickedness, openly Resists, and Defies the *Crown of Heaven and Earth* both together.

Whatever, Sir, be your Station, Revenue, Titles, and Dignity, you cannot imagine, sure, that you have any Authority to be a *Common Swearer*, as you are a *Gentleman*, a *Magistrate*, or a *Soldier*.

First, As a *Gentleman*, how utterly should you scorn such Boarish Manners, as infinitely below you! That which is a Badge of Infamy to the very scum of the People; arguing no better Rank and Quality, than to be of the Hissing Lineage of the Old Serpent, who is for Spitting his Venom most against him that is absolutely the Best. Can it become your Dignity, or ever be reckon'd as any of your Bravery? Be sure, that Lamp of Reputation which is fed with God's Dishonour, will cast but a very ill Smell in any Nostrils, except such as prefer the nastiest Dunghill before the sweetest Garden. The *Swearing* which I now make bold to capitulate with you concerning, but like an Imposthume issuing out of a dead Mans mouth, speaks you even *Dead in Sin*, and so rots your Name, and lays all your Honour in the dust.

But

But the most unaccountable thing it is, that ever *Swearing* should be reputed a Mark of fine Breeding; or any gentle, graceful Property, which in truth is so contrary to all good Manners, and a rude Entrenching upon all Orderliness and Common Civility; a Nuisance and Affront to every Ingenious, Sober Company; and the greatest Offence to all that fear God, and make any Conscience at all of his Word; who had rather you should spit in their Faces, than so outrageously abuse and mock the Sovereign Object of all their dearest Love, and highest Regard.

Next, as a *Magistrate*; Are you not obliged, Sir, to Check and Punish this very thing, which your self have been so deep in the guilt of? And which your own Practice so tends to Countenance and Embolden, that the *Vulgar* take no small Pride to be in your Fashion, thinking to ingratiate themselves with their Betters, by licking your Ulcers; yea are afraid to be hissed off the Stage as Squeamish *Precisians*, should they be so cowardly as not venture to Copy our such Presidents; and so even to save their Credit, it seems necessary to transplant their Shame into your Soil. Thus instead of exerting your Power and Interest to quash that Profaneness and Blasphemy, which *makes the Land to mourn*, and cries aloud for Vengeance; How do you sadden the Souls of the Righteous, strengthen the Hands of the Wicked, and express the greatest Spight and Enmity to your Country, in doing still so much the more mischief, by how much the larger is your Influence? For this makes the *Wicked* Swagger, and tumultuously walk on every side, when the vilest Men are exalted. When such possess the Places of Honour, Trust and Power, as not only stand for Cyphers, to let the most obnoxious escape with Impunity; and dare not shame that which Dishonours

nours God, lest it should put themselves to extreme Confusion; but also serve for a Back and Skreen to the Blasphemous Rout, to make them scorn the *Parson*, and set every Reprover at defiance, when as they have such big Names to quote for their Justification and Warrant. O! Sir, How do you think the Eternal JUDGE of Quick and Dead, will in the final Audit, look upon this sort of *Magistrates*, that gave such singular aid and furtherance to his *Ministers*?

Again, as a *Soldier*; Can you think it your Valour, Sir, to hector God Almighty? And that you are a stout Man, because you dare make so bold (as no one in his right Wits would do) with the Supreme Majesty? Whom to contemn, the very Heathens have counted it no better than Fool-hardiness and Madness; Or is there any thing like a wise Conduct in the Case, when as you are engaged against other Enemies, to go *strive with your Maker*, and so make him your Enemy too? O! Sir, if you would approve your self truly Great and Courageous, here's a Combat worthy the faithful *Soldier and Servant of Christ Jesus*, even to encounter with all your might this reigning *Sin of Swearing*, that like another *Mighty Goliath*, sends out Challenges against Heaven, defying not only the *Hoshs of the Living God*, but even the *God of Hoshs* himself; yea, that Marches through the World, Great and Terrifying, Insolent and Domineering, to dishearten, even, the Zealous for their Lord's Interest, from venturing to resist it.

When this Parry of Rebels is grown so big, that the Injustice of the Cause even ceaseth to be questioned, and their Numbers pass for Arguments on their side; and therefore do so many take the boldness to list themselves into the Hellish Regiment; taking it for a piece of Cowardice to *fear an Oath*; when he that will not

Swear.

called a Bastard? And the most indelible Brand of Cowardice, not to stand up in your own Vindication, under such a vile Imputation. But, truly Sir, if a *Son* honours his Father, and cannot endure to see him exposed, or hear him ridicul'd; I must be bold to tell you, that you give shrew'd suspicion you are but of a Spurious Brood, and no true Child of the *Heavenly Father*, when you can find in your heart, so *unnaturally*, and even of set purpose, to load his *Name* with Scorn; yea, when you can but be a tame and silent Witness of his Dishonour, and your Blood not rise, and *your Spirit not be stirr'd in you*, to put you upon the Vindicating and Asserting of his Right and Glory.

Should one offer to give you the Lye, I know, Sir, you would think your Honour so touched, there were not only Apology enough for a Quarrel, but even necessity of a Duel. And yet, if you are a *Swearer*, pray what considering Man will you ever induce to believe that you are no *Liar*? For what should make him strain so much at a *Lye*, who has so glib a Swallow for *Oath upon Oath*? When the very same *Lord* that said, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self*; said also, *Swear not at all*: He that sticks not to thwart him in the latter, it is hard trusting him in the former. And to tye *Truth* to such *Mens Oaths*, how fond and senseless is it? It is true, say you, for I heard such a one *swear it*: Pitiful Logick! When the right Inference from the Premises is just on the other side, It's false, or nothing like to be true, because a *Swearer* affirmed it. For what's said by the *Swearers*, be sure comes from none of *Christ's* Scholars, who is *Truth* it self; they are better Taught, and *Swear not at all*. It must then come from them, who are of his training up, that is, the *Father of Lyes*, and is to be credited thereafter. And such must never hope

to recover their Credit among the *Wife*, till they cease to be found among the *Swearers*; their *Word* then, will indeed go a great deal further than now their *Oath*.

Do but see then here, Sir, how mischievous to the World, and what an irreparable wrong to humane Society, is the weakning these Sacred Bonds of Conscience, by the frequent use of *Oaths* in ordinary Chat, so to render them cheap and contemptible; when the *Awe and Reverence of an Oath* is quite lost and gone, by debasing it to every toyish purpose; And when Men can play with *Oaths*, even every where; - alas, who can expect they should be punctual and serious therein any where? And after this rate, what the more satisfaction can you have, when you give Men their *Oaths*, that they do not make a *Lye* as well as make *Oath*? And how can the *King and Queen* be sure of such Mens *Allegiance*, or any one else of their true *Testimony of Fidelity* to their Promise? And so Kingdoms are shaken, and all *Faith and Trust* among Men destroyed, by the idle, trivial use of *Swearing*. And for all such Damages accruing to the Publick, from this horrid Abuse of Speech, every *Common Swearer* is responsible; and much more those of Eminent Station, who by their Examples should teach others better.

How like a Ruler then, that *Rules for God*, as well as *Reigns by him*, does the King's most Excellent Majesty now urge the hampering those *unruly Beasts of the People* with Penal Inflictions, that will not be wrought upon to forgo such a Barbarous Practice, by any more fair persuasive Methods? And as they are the deadly Enemies of their Country, who will not abridge themselves of this Ungodly Pleasure, tho

it were to save a Church, to save a Kingdom, and to please God and the King both together; So I dare refer it to your self, Sir, (when you do but entertain any serious Thoughts) what true Friends they can be to the *Publick*, who in such a Case as this, will Heal and Connive at the Offenders, and not dare, what in them lies, as far as they are bound, to bring such notorious Criminals to Shame and Suffering. But this, alas, we are not like to have the pleasure of seeing; till the Lesser Wheels move yet more regularly under the Greater. For the Vulgar will not think it good Manners to lead their Betters the way, till *yes, yes; and nay, nay;* become the Mode of their Landlords and Masters, as well as of their King and Queen; and not only *Sovereignty* on the Throne, but *Magistracy* also on the Bench; *sears an Oath*. But, O! how happy then would it be with us, if every one concern'd would act as Good Subjects under the Best of Rulers, who are not for bearing the Sword in Vain, but would be (as a Joy to them that do well, so) a Terror to Evil-doers.

Now, this, Sir, I cannot but think most pertinent for your Consideration, who profess so much Love to your Country, and Loyalty to King William and Queen Mary. They are both indeed excellent Pretensions, and 'tis great pity you should be therein guilty of any Self-contradictions.

For how can you sincerely Love your Country, when you Patronize the cursed thing that bodes nothing but its Ruin? As His Sacred Majesty, most truly and piously, like himself, has laid down the Position, That our Religion, Peace, and Happiness, are all endangered by reason of that overflowing of Vice, which is too notorious in this Nation.

And what *Loyalty to Their Majesties*, when still you are so much for the thing, which they have declared themselves so much against? 'Tis, methinks, a strange sort of *Loyalty*, only to Crows and Provocate them. Though the Ranting *Loyalty* of Debauched Russians, it's true, was a while ago in Fashion; yet, pray good Sir, remember, that now it's another Reign, and such Princes (blessed be God) we are under, as do not make a Jest of all Serious Religion. And the pretence of honouring them with God's Dishonour, is growing so fullsome, that nothing more uncovers the Nakedness of the Authors; when the *King's* published Letter again acquaints us, *That He most earnestly desires, and will endeavour a General Reformation of the Lives and Manners of all His Subjects, as being that which must establish His Throne.* What Supporters then are they of the *Throne*, who think still to testify their *Loyalty* by the most prophane Extravagancy? And what Honour and Deference do they pay to the *Royal Pleasure*, who instead of striving to promote it, only give broad Significations, how much they Scorn and Contemn it?

I have heard you declare, Sir, That you are no Papist, Phanatick, nor Disaffected to the Present Government. Yea, I perceive too much, you are very forward, uncall'd, to *Swear*, when some will not *Swear* now, though called to it. But in good truth, Sir, I think it is to little purpose, what you do call your self, as long as you abide under this *Heinous Guilt*; for at the bottom they can be of no Religion at all, but are the foulest Scandal to the *Christian Name*, and a heavy Plague to the World, who Name God in their *Oaths*, oftner than
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in their *Prayers*; and have little to do with Him, but only thus to provoke him. See that you do not here symbolize too tight with *Rome*, before you are aware, in postponing the *weighty Matters of the Law, to the Mint, Annise and Cummin*; while you inveigh most bitterly against all that (to a hairs breadth) conform not to Humane Institutions, and in the mean time your self can swallow the Camels of such Monstrous *Quib*, as make the greatest Violation, and the rudest Attack upon God's own express Commands.

One would think you owed the *Church of England* no real Kindness, Sir, when you so eagerly lay claim to its Membership, only to Reproach it; as if it gave you a Protection for that open Ungodliness, which the the very *Light of Nature* utterly Shames and Condemns: And you would prove your self a *Son of the Church*; by acting like a *Child of the Devil*. Sir, you too much Credit those, whom you so divert your self to Belpatter; yea, you change Names with them, while you Rant at them. For who in earnest is the bigger Fanatick and Madcap, he that boggles at an indifferent Ceremony, or he that makes no Conscience at all of the most notorious Damnable Iniquity? Do you think to Convert Dissenters with your hairbrain'd *Swearing and Damning*? Or to invite them into our Holy Communion, with such leud Communication? Indeed, no wonder this should make the *Offering of the Lord* abhorred; and bring a Scandal and Prejudice on the best Cause it self, for the sake of such kind of Patrons and Abettors appearing in it, only to turn the Adversaries Stomachs more, and open their Mouths wider against it.

Be it known to you, Sir, The Church of England is no Mother of such Abominations: 'Tis the gillest mistake in any, that think to find *swearing* in her *Litany*. And he as obstinately shuts his Eyes against the Light, who sees not all irreverent Abuse of God's Name, cried down in her *Homily*. But when you can so defile your own Nest, and Blemish the most Excellent Profession, as well as desperately sling at the Glory of Him that made you; Here, if ever, The Righteous Judge of all the Earth is concern'd to shew himself, and take such Audacious Criminals in hand, to make them feel it in Judgments worthy of God, who will not leave off, so to dare him to it; but carry on the Affront still, tho' their Sin hath not so much as the face of any Worldly Interest, or Fleishly Pleasure in it; and there's no Natural Inclination, or Imperuous Appetite to it, nor so much as to make the Plea of Humane Infirmity for it. But the mad *Sweater* *swears* ever for pure *swearing* sake; Sins *Gratis*, in Contempt of Heaven; and Sells his Soul for no Consideration at all, but out of a Fantastick Humour, to follow an inconsiderate Herd to his own Eternal Ruin.

Good Sir, you have Reason to Judge and Consider in Cases much less plain than this; what Lethargy then has seized your Sense, that it does not befriend you here? To reflect, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the Hands of the Living God, who is a Righteous Judge, Strong, and Patient, and wretchedly provoked (you know it) every day. But think you not that he could command the Earth to open her Jaws, and take the *Sweaters* down quick into Hell, as once it did *Corah* and his Crew? Or think you

you not, that he could Rain a Hell down even from Heaven, as he did on *Sodom*, and the Cities of the Plain? For certain *his Arm is not shortened*, that he cannot; but his Bowels are so tender, he waits, and gives all Men space to Repent and Turn; which if after all his Goodness that should lead them to Repentance, they will not, it's time for him then to lay to his Hand, and *whet his Sword*, and *tend his Bow*, and make ready his Arrows, and prepare for them the Instruments of Death.

Your self, Sir, I am sure, would never endure to have such Contempt cast upon you, and such affronts offered you: And must he, that is so beyond all Comparison more Excellent, be thus put upon, and take all the foulest Indignities from you? All the Patience in the World else, would never bear at this rate. And abundant Experience indeed, Sir, you have had of it, that God is *Long suffering*; But yet he that endures so long, will not do it always: Abused Mercy must be righted, and will have Vengeance. Tho the prophane Swearer may be ready to think himself hail-fellow with his *Glorious Maker*; yet be sure his Sin will find him out. God has his Book of Accounts, in which all the Oaths stand upon Record; and he hath said, *He will not hold him Guiltless*: And the Blasphemous Wretch will be like to find a *Melchisedech* too in that Threat, which imports thus much more than is express, that such shall be proceeded against as the most guilty. And 'tis as if he should say, I will be sure to punish them, whoever else escape; because of my Name, I am most tender, even as the *Apple of mine Eye*; such shall therefore take my Name in vain another day too, and in the last Judgment, cry *Lord*,
Lord,

Lord, but I will not hear them. And after all their time of *Swearing* and *Slighting* me, I will take my time to cast them off, and *swear they shall never enter into my Rest.*

Thus is the *Sweary's* Doom gone out already: And he does but Antidate his own *Eternal Dirges*, as he so often Anticipates the Sentence of his own *Damnation*; beginning betimes to Exercise himself in that *Cursing and Blapheming*, which is like to be the best Musick of his Torments for ever; and so well may *Orcus* signify, both an *Oath* and *Hell*, when they are so near a kin. The Place rings with such Sounds, and it gapes for such Miscreants, as use to belch out this Poyson, only to please a Devilish Humour.

Now, Sir, will you cry, *Damn him, he Preaches Damnation!* Tho you should so vent your Indignation; you know a Reason why I am not to wonder at the very worst you can say against your *Fellow-Creature*. But with your leave, Sir, if I do predict the *Wrath to come*, that you may *see from it*, I think I do but offer you a Blessing for your Imprecation; and let my Charity find only the contemptuous Return, *He Preaches!* I shall as little regard to be made the Scorn of the *Swearys*, as the *Song of the Drunkards.*

But I hope better things yet, Sir, from such a Temper and Reason as yours. I hope that you, who can be so obliging to others, will not perversly shake off a Servant of his you call your *Saviour*, only *Praying you in Christ's stead to be Reconciled unto God.* I hope that you, who know so much more than many of your poor Inferiors, will be Wiser than to make the sad purchase of *more Stripes*, for
striking

striking so madly at God himself, when as Conscience cannot chuse but tell you all the while, 'tis nothing but *kicking against the pricks*, and Struggling with Him, who will certainly prove quite too hard for you.

Your fair Reception of a late Friendly Admonition, speaks you to be of another nature than those Beasts that *turn again, and rent* their Reprovers. And it is a thousand pities, that a Disposition and Ingenuity capable of the most Excellent Impressions, should be so over-run with rank Weeds, and the most pernicious Briars.

Alas, Sir, What can you ever propose to your self, in adhering to a Scandalous Haunt, that hath no manner of Satisfaction, even to the Carnal Appetite; pleaseth never a Sense? You know what the Ingenious and Honourable Mr. Herbers says, *Were I an Epicure, I could hate Swearing; 'tis Pleasure that dwells on the Drunkard; filthy Lucre that's the Misers bait; and the Ambitious tows after the Lure of Honour; all have some Colour, tho false, for their Exit; only the Diabolical Swearer embraces Wickedness even for it self.*

Let me beseech you then, Sir, for pity to your own Soul, (if not for the Fear and Love of God) Rescue it from the Bonds of this Ruining Custom, and do not yield your self to be taken Captive by the Devil at his will. But after all your impious Oaths, will you make ones Religious Vow, never so to Swear again; and *Fear an Oath*, even as you would dread a Chain that will bind you to Fire unquenchable. O! let him that gave you a Tongue, and Power to use it, have the Praise and Glory of it. And do not make it the Wea-

pon so to Fight with your Maker, against whom none did ever stand it out and prosper. Nor think it will ever at all lessen your self, should you vouchsafe most highly to magnify Him, and for ever stand in awe of Him, whom all the Noblest Creatures in the World are Ambitious to Honour and Adore.

Can it chuse, Sir, but grate hard upon your Rational Sense, to pervert that Power of speaking, which sets you so much above the Bruits, to make you even like the Devils? And shall the Member, stil'd your Glory, only serve to shame your self, for throwing Dirt with it at your *Lord and Master*? O! What hath he ever done to you, that you should so fly upon him? Hath he filled you so full with his abundant Kindnesses of various Sorts, only that you should Swell and Burst out against him, and ever and anon be speaking Evil of Him, who is continually doing you Good? And what are you made of, if that most Venerable Word of his, which Awes all the World, is no more to you than the most Contemprible Ballad, which you can Trample in the Dirt; venturing still to Swear so thick, when therein you are so strictly charged, *Not to do it at all*?

O! Sir, as you have, I say, not only, any Conscience and Religion of a *Christian*, but any Sobriety, Decency, and Discretion of a *Man*; have no more to do with such notorious Works of the Devil, but Renounce, Reprove them, and testify your Abhorrence of them; and make all else, that ever you are able, asham'd and afraid of them. O! use your Tongue henceforth

henceforth to better purposes, than as the Boystrous Instrument to lift up against Heaven, and destroy your own Soul, and injure all your Neighbours, (I say, *All*) while you nothing but harden some, and sadden the rest. And let not the same *Mouth*, with which you pray to God, and praise him, be ever wrung to those harsh and hideous Notes of *Cursing and Blaspheming*.

O! be Thankful to Him, that he hath not long since taken you off in the Act of *Swearing*, and thrown you down into the place of *endless Cursing*. And *speak Good of his Name*, which he would have to be for ever exalted above all things; take it not into your *Mouth* only to pollute it; nor ever mention it, but with all *Reverence and Godly Fear*. If you take not the Lord for a dumb Idol, dare not any more so to *Reproach the Living God*. For, alas, the little Bubble that Swells, and arrogantly imagines to appear Big for huffing the Almighty himself, will but thus the sooner be dashed to pieces; and God will get Glory to himself in confounding the proud Rebel, who after a little Blaze, shall go out in a Stench here, and awake hereafter to Shame and Everlasting Contempt. But *them that Honour him, God will Honour*: Honour them with that Honour that is of himself, a deserved Reputation on *Earth*, and *Glory Everlasting in his Heavenly Kingdom*.

Sir, I fear you are tired with reading, and I hope you will grow as weary of the rebuked Sin, which yet will bring you a far heavier Reckoning. I pray, that you may so feel the Burden of its Guilt, that
you

you may never feel the Weight of its Punishment,
And God grant that you may become as Eminent and
Exemplary for your Tenderness and Zeal to Reverence
the Name of God, and Assert his Glory, as ever
you have been Obnoxious, and under Censure, for
making bold with his Titles, and trampling upon his
Honour. I am, Sir,

Your most Faithful Monitor,

and Humble Servant,

B. J.

FINIS.

